

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE NEW WORLD DEMOCRACY

(By ARCHBISHOP REDWOOD.)

President Wilson has repeatedly stated that the great war was fought to make the world safe for democracy, and many signs point to the establishment, in no remote future, of democracy throughout the world. It has been asked how will the Catholic Church fare in the new world-democracy. Some silly blatant folk have said that the Catholic Church, being an autocracy, is bound to disappear in the great cataclysm about to overwhelm all the autocratic Governments of the world. Vain hope, foolish surmise! The argument contains two statements: First, the Catholic Church is an autocracy; second, the Catholic Church cannot live and thrive in a democracy—both statements are false.

I.—The Catholic Church is not an autocracy. According to the generally received definition, autocracy is independent and self-derived power. An autocratic religion, therefore, is one that derives power from itself, depends on no source outside itself for its authority and the exercise thereof. Does the Catholic Church square with this definition? Certainly not. Look at the things that stand out prominently in that Church—her constitution, her mission, her doctrine, her morality. These are certainly not self-derived. They were given to her by Jesus Christ, her Divine Founder. He said to Peter, and through Peter, to Peter's successors, the Popes of Christendom: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, shall be bound also in Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in Heaven. . . . I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not, and thou being once converted confirm thy brethren. . . . Feed My lambs, feed My sheep." Christ also said to His Apostles, and, through them, to their successors, the bishops of the Catholic Church: "Go ye into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. . . . Going therefore teach ye all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, behold, I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world. . . . As the Father hath sent Me I also send you. . . . He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me. And he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me." The constitution, mission, doctrine, and morality of the Catholic Church outlined in these words are, therefore, not self-derived. They are divine. They come to the Church from God through Jesus Christ, His Divine Son. It is no objection to say that the people had nothing to do with their making. Religion is essentially from God. Man-made religion is a contradiction in terms. Religion is God's gift to the world—a gift by which man may be sanctified here and saved hereafter. Who shall say that the recipient, and not the giver, has the right to determine the conditions of the gift?

But, though the constitution, mission, doctrine, and morality of the Catholic Church are divine in their source, in their human application they are most democratic. The Founder of the Church and the Framer of her constitution was indeed the Son of God, but to establish His Church among men He Himself did not disdain to become a man, and, that the Church might never forget its democratic origin, He chose for His mother a lowly virgin, for his foster-father a humble carpenter, and for most of his Apostles poor fishermen. The successors of the Apostles, the bishops of the Church, though "appointed for men in the things of God," have nevertheless been "taken from among men," oftentimes from the poor and the lowly. Pope

Pius X., for instance, was the son of the postmaster of Riese. Cardinal Farley, of New York, was the son of a peasant, and the father of the late and ever illustrious Archbishop Ireland was a carpenter. Hear what President Wilson has to say of the democracy of the Catholic Church and of her hierarchy and priesthood during the day when government was monarchic and aristocratic:—"The only reason government did not suffer dry rot in the Middle Ages, under the aristocratic system which then prevailed, was that so many of the men who were efficient instruments of government were drawn from the Church, from that great religious body which was the only Church, that body which is now distinguished from other religious bodies as the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church was then, as it is now, a great democracy. There was no peasant so humble that he might not become a priest, no priest so obscure that he might not become the Pope of Christendom, and every Chancellery in Europe was ruled by those learned, trained, and accomplished men, the priesthood of that great and dominant body. What kept government alive during the Middle Ages was this constant rise of the sap from the root, from the rank and file of the great body of the people, through the free channels of the priesthood."

The mission of the Church is from God, but it is a mission to "all nations," to "every creature." The Church makes "no distinction between Jew and Greek, barbarian and Scythian, bond and free, male and female. All are one with her in Jesus Christ." Before the altar king and peasant, governor and governed, learned and ignorant, white or black—all are equal. Chief Justice Taney of the United States was one Saturday night awaiting his turn to go to confession in the Cathedral of Baltimore, when a laboring man about to enter the confessional came down the line and said: "Take my place. It is not becoming that the Chief Justice should be kept waiting so long." Taney replied: "I am not Chief Justice here. I am only the criminal at the bar."

The doctrine of the Church is divine, but it proclaims that all men have the same origin, the same destiny, that all are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and that all will appear on a footing of equality before the same dread tribunal to give an account of the deeds done in the flesh.

The morality of the Church is the eternal law written in the hearts and consciences of all men, and contained in the Decalogue promulgated by Moses and adapted by Jesus Christ; but it is a law which obliges all men, without exception—the great as well as the little ones of the earth, the wise as well as the illiterate, the rich as well as the poor, the Pope and the bishops and the priests as well as the layman, the State as well as the individual. The moral code of the Church admits no double standard. It is founded on the democracy of the Ten Commandments.

The discipline and legislation of the Church, though based on the immutable principles of dogma and morals, adapts itself to the genius of peoples, to the manners, customs, and institutions, and to the varying conditions of time and place. The celibacy of the clergy, modelled after Christ and His Apostles, and by the example of moral heroism predisposing the world to the acceptance of the Gospel, has not always been enjoined, nor ever imposed on all parts of the Church. Marriage laws, while never losing sight of the unity, sanctity, and indissolubility of Christian wedlock, have frequently been changed, and are not the same in every country. Clauddes-tinity, for example, made a diriment impediment by the Council of Trent, in the sixteenth century, was never enforced in all parts of the United States, Australia, and New Zealand until Pius X. issued the *Ne Temere* Decree, which went into effect in 1908. Likewise, laws of fasting and abstinence have not been the same always and everywhere. In a word, while refusing to yield one iota of the divine deposit of faith and

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